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REPORT

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COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT Standard of Living in the
Carpathian Oblast

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25X1

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25X1

1. There was no difference between workmen's wages in the various towns of the Carpathian Oblast and in the Ukrainian SSR as a whole. A unified system of wages had been established throughout the Ukrainian SSR, and probably the entire USSR (except specially designated regions), whereby workers with certain qualifications received the same wage whether they worked in Mukachevo, [4826N-2242E], Uzhgorod, [4838N-2219E], Kiev, or Odessa.
2. From 1949 to 1952 wages remained practically the same in the Carpathian Oblast; but because of the piece rate system and the constant increases in work norms, workers constantly had to intensify their efforts and work faster and harder just to maintain their wage levels.
3. The average wage of the unskilled workman in 1949 in the Carpathian Oblast was 450 rubles per month. The average monthly wage of a skilled worker was 700 rubles. The same wages prevailed in 1952. Additional benefits were work clothes (issued to all workers employed by the mining and heavy industry enterprises) and medical services rendered free of charge to all USSR citizens (workers did not enjoy any special benefits in this respect).

25X1

SECRET

SECURITY INFORMATION

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

SECRET/SECURITY INFORMATION

25X1

- 2 -

Immediately after World War II and throughout the first postwar years, workers did, indeed, enjoy some benefits, such as cheaper clothes and food sold through the Workers' Consumer Goods and Food Supply Section (Otdel rabocheho snabzheniya - ORS). With the normalization of production and market conditions, the ORS's lost their importance and by 1951 or 1952 were practically out of the picture.

4. It is most difficult to give detailed information on the standard of living in the Carpathian Oblast, because the living standard was so very low, and the purchasing power of workers so minimal. It is practically impossible to say what an average worker considered adequate for his needs; in this respect, the situation in the Carpathian Oblast seemed to be much worse than elsewhere in the USSR. The population of the Carpathian Oblast still had a clear recollection of what the living standard had been prior to 1939, when the Oblast was a part of Czechoslovakia; the standard of living then was approximately 150 % higher than in 1952. A worker in 1939 had to spend 20% of his wages for food; in 1952 he had to spend 80 % and even then he was unable to obtain what he had been accustomed to in 1939. In fact, if one spent 80% of his wages on food in 1952, he would only be living near the subsistence level. To illustrate, one kilogram of meat cost 15-22 rubles, and butter cost 60 rubles per kilogram. A worker was glad if he could buy a piece of meat once a week. It took him several years, living on a subsistence diet to save enough money (800-1,000 rubles) to buy an average-quality suit.
5. Housing was another difficult problem. Government apartments were scarce and, although not expensive (a one-room apartment with kitchenette cost approximately 30-40 rubles per month), were practically unobtainable by anybody but Stakhanovites. Private apartments of one to two rooms with kitchen rented for about 150-200 rubles a month.
6. A worker who earned 450 rubles monthly, would have considered, for example, that he needed a monthly income of 2,000 rubles to support his needs adequately. He would have realized, however, that even with this income he would still not reach the standard of living he had had until 1939. His 1939 standard would have been impossible not only because of the money needed to attain it, but also because certain types of goods and high-quality merchandise simply were not available on the Soviet market.
7. In order to get along on their extremely low incomes, practically everybody in the Carpathian Oblast was engaged in some kind of semi-illegal or outright illegal activity by which he could make money on the side.
 - a. Skilled and even some unskilled workers usually worked several hours in the evening at home manufacturing various articles, or working on the construction of private buildings. (Carpenters made furniture; metal workers made cigarette lighters and cases, etc.) Some of them, for protection in case they were discovered, made application to the local tax office (FinOtdel) for authorization to work privately two or three hours daily in addition to their normal occupation. Such requests were normally granted. Several inspections were made by FinOtdel personnel in the apartments or workshops of such applicants and the monetary value of the outside activity determined; when this had been done, a 25% tax was then levied on the total production value. Falsification of the true production values was an easy matter in the face of these routine inspections, however; and bribery of the inspectors was possible.
 - b. Another additional source of income was the private ownership of livestock. One cow, several pigs, and chickens raised by a worker's wife would provide food products worth more than the husband's wages.

SECRET

- c. Not the least source of income, although strictly prohibited by law, was speculation in food products. The great difference in prices of various foodstuffs between certain localities in the Ukraine created favorable conditions for this activity. The Mukachevo and Uzhgorod regions had many orchards, and fruit was cheap. Several baskets of cherries, pears, or apricots, taken to L'vov would bring a 500 % profit. On the other hand, flour, seed onions, groats, black pepper (obtained only on the black market) bought in L'vov and sold in Mukachevo brought a profit of 150 to 200%. Sugar bought in Kiev brought a 50 to 70 % profit in Mukachevo. In 1951 I brought some seed onions from Kiev and sold them in Mukachevo at a profit of 5,000 rubles. Not even 5 to 10 years of forced labor imposed by the courts for such speculations could stop this activity, which was carried on mostly by women. Here again, since control of these activities lay with the militia, which was corruptible, a bribe paid to the militia man was the best way to avoid punishment.
8. Rationing of food and consumer goods was abolished throughout the USSR in 1947. Consumer appraisal of the quality of goods was more discriminating in the Carpathian Oblast than in the rest of the USSR, because of the memory of Czechoslovak standards. I do not think the "junk" Soviet products could ever hold their own on a free, competitive market with foreign products.
9. [redacted] prices of consumer goods in the Carpathian Oblast, those prevailing in Mukachevo /Encl.A/ 25X1
There, as everywhere in the Carpathian Oblast, there was sometimes considerable difference in the prices of goods sold in stores and on the open market.
10. There was considerable variation from market to market in the prices of many goods throughout the USSR. Main factors controlling the situation were: availability of supplies; fertility of the land and natural resources; relationship between supply and demand; and transportation costs. The Soviet system for the organization of trade and supply, administered by disinterested state officials who worked for fixed salaries and were only intent on protecting their positions, aggravated the situation.
11. Several price reductions were effected in the USSR after World War II. Price reductions were always published in daily newspapers and broadcast over the radio; they were always expressed in percentages, indicating in a very exact way groups of goods to which price reductions were to be applied, as well as categories and sub-categories within each group. Very often, however, these price reductions were only "paper" benefits. Old merchandise would be placed in new containers, instead of on sale as announced, and it would then be labelled "Top Quality" or "First Grade" ("Vysshiiy Sort" or "Pervyy Sort") and sold at prices which were higher than before price reductions. 25X1
[redacted] this happened in the case of several kinds of canned fish which had sold prior to their last price reduction at 5 1/2 rubles and two weeks later, with new labels, for seven rubles. The same sort of thing occurred with macaroni, noodles, and many other packaged and piece goods.
12. There were two basic sources for purchase of consumer goods in Mukachevo: state stores and the free market. Cooperative stores (workers' consumer goods supply sections) as such were abolished; they were taken over by the city and rayon trade agencies (GorTorg, RayKooperatsiya). In Mukachevo there was a military store (VoyenTorg) which was not off-limits to civilians; almost all goods available in VoenTorg stores could be bought by civilians at the same prices as for military personnel. The assortment of goods in the VoenTorg store was always considerably better than in GorTorg stores. The following is the approximate percent volume of goods sold in the various stores in Mukachevo (1950 - 1952):

SECRET

SECRET/SECURITY INFORMATION

25X1

- 4 -

<u>TYPE OF STORE</u>	<u>FOOD</u>	<u>CLOTHING FOOTWEAR</u>	<u>HARDWARE</u>	<u>MISC.</u>
State Stores	40%	60%	70%	50%
Free Market	60%	25% (second hand)	10% (second hand)	25%
VoyenTorg		15%	20%	25%

25X1

13. Although supply of meat in Mukachevo stores was irregular, there was usually a sufficient supply of fresh meat on the market. Sometimes the stores had smoked meat. Fresh fish was scarce, but stores always had frozen fish as well as smoked fish. Pickled fish, mostly herring, was available in stores from time to time. Throughout the year stores had an abundant supply of canned goods: meat, stews, fish, vegetables, and fruit. Canned vegetables and fruit (without sugar) were three to four times as expensive as fresh. 25X1
14. There was one large hotel in Mukachevo with a first-class dining room (Restoran Pervogo Razryada), several other restaurants and snack bars (Zakusochnaya), and quite a number of messes attached to various enterprises. 25X1
15. The sample budgets are for three income groups in Mukachevo or any other town in the Carpathian Oblast. Each family consists of husband, wife, and two children under 17 years of age; both parents work; none are Party members (party fee on a 1200 ruble wage was 68 rubles, which amounted to almost seven per cent), and all families described would be assigned government apartments.
16. Refrigeration facilities for consumer goods were available only to plants and stores. There were no storage or warehouse facilities available to private citizens.
17. There were two hotels in Mukachevo: Hotel Zvezda, with 150-200 rooms; and Hotel Vesna, with 50-60 rooms. The price of a single room at the Zvezda was 25 to 30 rubles; and of a double room, 40 rubles. A bed in a room with five beds cost 10 rubles. Although a large number of rooms were always occupied by various transient officials, it was not too difficult for an ordinary person to obtain a room in either one of these hotels.
18. Medical services in the Carpathian Oblast, just as everywhere else in the USSR, were free. About 11 km. northwest of Mukachevo on the road to Svalava, in Cinadovo, there was a very elegant rest home (i/n Khrushcheva) belonging to the USSR trade union. Two weeks' stay at this rest home cost 1,000 rubles; the larger part of this sum was always paid by the union. Two kilometers north of Svalava, in Hrabovnice, was a rheumatism sanatorium for approximately 250-300 patients [no further information].
19. Laundry and dry cleaning services were rather expensive in Mukachevo. To have a man's suit dry cleaned cost approximately 25 rubles. Beauty salons as such were unknown in the provincial towns; there were a few shops where a simple hairdo could be obtained for 25-30 rubles. There was a number of barber shops where a shave or haircut could be had for five rubles. Three of four photo stores were available in Mukachevo where camera and photographic equipment could be bought and films developed and printed.
20. Insurance of realties and livestock was obligatory. This was done by the State Social Insurance Agency (GosSotsStrakh). Insurance for a

SECRET

SECRET/SECURITY INFORMATION

25X1

- 5 -

private one-family house cost 150 to 200 rubles annually. It cost 30 rubles a year to insure a pig. Private property could be insured, if desired, for 5, 10, or 25 years with the GosSotsStrakh.

21. All schools and other educational institutions in the Carpathian Oblast were state-operated. It was illegal to give private lessons. There was one public library in Mukachevo; the monthly membership fee was one ruble. A deposit on books taken home was not required, but the number of the borrower's passport was recorded.
22. Garbage and sewage disposal were available in Mukachevo and in Uzhgorod.
23. There were no religious organizations in the Carpathian Oblast; all of them having been closed in 1945 and 1946. The Red Cross and Red Crescent Society was a volunteer welfare organization whose activity in peacetime was limited to medical care for children (vaccination and immunization), lectures, and exhibitions. The membership fee was nominal. There were several nurseries and kindergartens in Mukachevo. The kindergartens were organized in almost all industrial enterprises, were excellently run, and the monthly charge for a child from three to seven years of age was 40 rubles, when the child's father's monthly wage was not more than 400 rubles; with higher wages, kindergarten tuition sharply increased. At these kindergartens children were well cared for and received four to five meals daily.
24. No private legal services were available in Mukachevo or Uzhgorod. There were several architects on duty with the City Municipal Council (Kommunal'nyy Otdel Gorodskogo Sovieta) where plans for private houses could be ordered. The fee for a plan for a one-family house was 250-300 rubles. (No Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade, or similar organizations were known in the USSR.)
25. There were several movie houses in Mukachevo and several in Uzhgorod. Tickets cost 2 - 3½ rubles. There was a theater in Mukachevo, but it had no permanent company. Traveling artists from larger cities in the Ukrainian SSR often came to give performances in this theater. Prices for the theater tickets were 4 to 20 rubles. There were quite a number of dancing places in Mukachevo; tickets cost from one to three rubles.

25X1

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